

Intercultural interpretation discourses, techniques and strategies used by tour guides in the Coach Museum, Lisbon: Eight issues

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The Coach Museum in Lisbon houses one of the finest collections of coaches in the world. It is the second most visited museum in Portugal and it is often included in the Lisbon city tour. Tourist guides often perform visits to the museum. They are mediators between heritage and tourists, involving them not only in the collection but also in the life of the people who used the coaches. A guided tour to the museum can be either a nightmare or nice dream. It will be a nightmare if the guide conveys uninteresting information about the objects and vehicles exhibited, if s/he is centred on him/herself. But it can also be very lively and interesting if interpretation strategies are centred around the tourist and his/her culture. The aim of intercultural interpretation is to awaken different kinds of emotions in the tourist, from piety to amusement, using fantasy and reality. This paper discusses the different characteristics tourist guides' interpretation assumes in Lisbon's Coach Museum. The researcher heard the speech of fifty professional guides visiting the museum, during the months of September and October 2009. Data obtained were included in his PhD thesis. The anthropological technique applied is direct observation, defined as "direct involvement of the field researcher with the social group studied, within the parameters of the group standards" (Iturra, 1987: 149). The paper is divided into the following parts: introduction (including tourist information versus intercultural heritage interpretation, methodology, interpretation- eight issues, and final considerations. The observation of tourist guides in their working context allowed the identification of the intercultural skills developed by these professionals, the interpretative strategies adopted in communication, and some behavioural patterns of both guides and tourists.

Keywords: intercultural interpretation, tourist guides, Coach Museum, Lisbon

1. Introduction

We are living now in an era characterized by the abundance of international contacts between people from different cultures, and their ability to understand and communicate effectively is becoming very important (Kielbasiewicz-Drozowska and Radko, 2006: 75).

As a consequence of this present need to communicate with different cultures, intercultural communication sciences have been created and developed. Intercultural communication sciences study the communication process between cultures, asserting that:

Intercultural communication always takes place when a statement, which is to be understood, is created by a representative of one culture, whereas its receiver is a representative of another culture (Dobek-Ostroska, 1998: 24).

Nowadays, intercultural communication is performed in many different settings such as modern technologies (internet sites, social networks, email), in the media, international business, emigration, and also in tourism. Tourism may be regarded as a socio-cultural phenomenon – people of two different cultures have to overcome not only their communication barriers but also their cultural barriers in a strange society. They become aware of the values, beliefs and norms of the other culture by constantly comparing them with the ones of their own culture. In tourism, many intercultural communication issues have to do with three features: ethnocentricity, prejudice and stereotypes.

It is usually accepted that travelling reduces ethnocentricity, but according to a study conducted by Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) it can increase ethnocentricity, especially if the trip is short. The authors state that only through language competence and a long lasting contact with the representatives of another culture, one can overcome ethnocentricity. A tourist usually assumes s/he is coming from a better and richer world because s/he can afford the trip. Therefore, s/he treats native people from a perspective of a client who has to be attended by the locals. That prevents tourists and locals from treating themselves at the same level and establishes a barrier in intercultural communication.

Prejudice, based on abusive generalizations and incomplete information, also influences intercultural communication. For instance, people may think that the Portuguese are always similar to the Arabs, so when they see a blond blue-eyed person they think they cannot be Portuguese! This happens because “individuals who are prejudiced in any way think in categories of a stereotype” (Kielbasiewicz-Drozowska and Radko, 2006: 81). Actually, when we are in contact with a different culture we react according to our stereotype about that culture. When we get to know someone from that culture we find out that the stereotype doesn’t match and we’ll reach the conclusion that actually that culture is not as we thought.

Cultural differences are the most challenging obstacle in effective communication. Therefore total communication between the representatives of two different cultures is impossible. The key to overcome this problem is the development of intercultural communication skills, which should be taught and learnt in secondary and higher education by all the people who work in the tourism sector. Research shows that intercultural competence cannot be acquired in a short period of time or in one module. It is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but a lifelong process, which needs to be addressed explicitly in learning and teaching.

In this paper intercultural competence in tourism is regarded as the ability to understand differences in one’s and other people’s cultures, accept them and react accordingly, treating foreigners in a way which is not offensive, scornful or insulting. It includes the increase of knowledge, the improvement of attitude and the change of behaviour in professionals of tourism (Luka, 2011).

The present work also discusses the different intercultural communication features that tourist guides’ interpretation assumes in the Lisbon Coach Museum. The main questions are how tourist guides overcome intercultural communication difficulties and which are the competences they acquire. We will analyse knowledge, attitude and emotions in the context of a standard visit of the Coach Museum, in Lisbon. The purpose is to identify and analyse eight intercultural communication strategies guides “choreograph” to interpret heritage and connect with their audience.

1.1. Intercultural Competence for Guiding

Culture can be defined as the sum of a way of life, including expected behavior, beliefs, values, language and living practices shared by members of a society. It consists of both explicit and implicit rules through which experience is interpreted (Herbig, 1998). Geert Hofstede (2001) refers to culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory describes the effects of a society’s culture on the values of its members, and how these values relate to behaviour, using a structure derived from factor analysis.

The author developed his original theory between 1967 and 1973. He proposed four dimensions along which cultural values could be analysed. Later on, a fifth and a sixth dimension of national culture were added. The six dimensions are labeled as follows:

1. *Power Distance*, related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality;
2. *Uncertainty Avoidance*, related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future;
3. *Individualism* versus *Collectivism*, related to the integration of individuals into primary groups;
4. *Masculinity* versus *Femininity*, related to the division of emotional roles between women and men;
5. *Long Term* versus *Short Term Orientation*, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past.
6. *Indulgence* versus *Restraint*, related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life (Hofstede, 2011: 8).

The quantification of cultural dimensions enables us to make cross-regional comparisons and form an image of the differences between not just countries but entire regions. For example, the cultural model of the Mediterranean countries is dominated by high levels of acceptance of inequalities, with uncertainty aversion influencing their choices. With regard to individualism, Mediterranean countries tend to be characterized by moderate levels of individualistic behaviour. The same applies to masculinity. Future orientation places Mediterranean countries in a middle ranking, showing a preference for indulgence values (<https://en.wikipedia.org>).

For professionals who work internationally and for people who interact daily with other people from different countries within their job, Hofstede's model gives insights into other cultures. In fact, intercultural communication requires being aware of cultural differences because what may be considered perfectly acceptable and natural in one country can be confusing or even offensive in another. Professionals in the area of tourism should be aware of such cultural differences in order to deal with them correctly, preventing misunderstanding and avoiding cultural shock.

They should develop intercultural competences defined by Messner and Schäfer (2012) as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures. Appropriately means that valued rules, norms, and expectations of the relationship are not violated significantly. Effectively means that valued goals or rewards (relative to costs and alternatives) are accomplished.

According to Byram (2000) intercultural competence includes attitude, knowledge, interpretation and relating skills, discovery and interaction skills, and critical awareness of culture. The acquisition of intercultural communication competences is slowly developed in a life long learning process that starts in school (learning a foreign language and contacting foreign students) and continues while gaining experience in everyday life, meeting people from other cultures (Korhonen, 2004).

In the area of tourism, namely for tourist guides, cultural mediation consists in establishing connections between the audience and the resource. In order to do it, guides have to develop an intercultural competence, defined as “The degree to which a guide is capable of being an effective cultural mediator” (Yu, Weiler and Ham, 2001: 77). Tourist guides must have relevant communication competences in two or more cultures to act effectively as mediators, i.e. they have to be bicultural or multicultural to deeply understand the visitor.

Therefore, the success of mediation depends largely on the acquisition of intercultural competences. There are many different ways of representing these competences. The European Council (2001) divides them in four types:

- Declarative Knowledge (*savoir*) - includes the knowledge of the world; the knowledge of the society and the culture of the country where a given language is spoken;
- Know-how (*savoir-faire*) - is the capacity of establishing a relationship between the foreign culture and our own country's culture;
- Existential competence (*savoir-être*) it is about some aspects of the individuals' personality; the attitudes;
- Ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*) it is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge modifying the latter when necessary.

LOLIPOP (Language On-Line Portfolio Project), a project managed by the School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies, in Dublin City University, defines three types of intercultural competences: a) knowledge – general and specific culture, products and practices from our own culture and from other cultures, identities and social groups performance, intercultural interaction performance; b) capacities – effective and appropriate behaviour, knowledge acquisition and use, culture interpretation and comparison, and; c) attitudes – curiosity, tolerance, ability to “decentre”. In this paper three types of intercultural competences (cognitive, affective and behavioural) are considered: knowledge, attitude and skills.

Knowledge (cognitive) is related to the amount of information that the tourist guide possesses of the tourist site, the attractions and the products. But it is also a deep knowledge of the culture s/he is interpreting and the tourist culture (verbal and non-verbal language, communication styles, values, social codes, artefacts). A guide who is fluent in both the language of the tourist and the language of the host faithfully translates the culture of the place and successfully contributes to intercultural exchange. Thus, s/he provides the tourist with a deep insight of the destination, s/he can help tourists to understand and accept local customs without passing value judgment on them and s/he can show visitors how to act avoiding cultural shock. In order to develop these competences, it is important for a guide to travel, to know the geography, the history, the society and the culture of his/her guests.

Attitude (affective) has to do with the personality of the individual and include motivations, tolerance, and the ability to overcome stereotypes. Attitudes are also related to the respect and empathy for both visitors and hosts. The attitude of the guide will leave a lasting impression on the tourist about the destination, because tourists look at the guide as a representative of the whole population of the country, with whom they have usually limited contact, whereas hosts look at the guide as the representative of a group of tourists. From the guide perspective, it is important to realise which is the best attitude in each different situation. For instance: how to behave on a coach with Christians, Jews and two Muslim ladies wearing a *burka*?

Skills define the guide's capacity of acting as a culture broker in an effective way in situations of intercultural misunderstanding or conflict. Guides must constantly negotiate shared meanings and communicate with dissimilar individuals. For instance, gesture can be misunderstood, in intercultural communication, and cause trouble. It is the case of holding the lobe of one's ear between thumb and forefinger and moving it back and for - it means “good” in Portugal and “gay” in Italy.

Table 1 shows the suggested intercultural competences for tourist guides, i.e. the competences they should develop along their education and training process, but especially from the moment they start working with foreign people. The development of these competences starts with the left column, when they become aware of the other culture features, proceeds with the middle column, when the attitudes towards the other start to change, and finishes with effective adjustments of

skills patterns in order to communicate with dissimilar cultures.

Knowledge	Attitude	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information about the tourist destination, its resources, attractions and products available to the tourist - Language level required – level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as minimum level to guide visitors and level B2 for the guide area-specific qualification – both in the language of the tourist and in the local language - Deep understanding of one's own culture, of the culture that s/he interprets and the culture of the tourist (verbal and non-verbal language, communication styles, values, social codes, artefacts) - Be well acquainted with the geography, history and society both of the tourist place of origin and the tourist destination - Explain the meaning and implications of globalization and relating local issues to global forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Openness and tolerance towards difference - Empathy and critical respect for the tourist and his/her culture - Empathy and critical respect for the host community and its culture - Focus tourist information and adjust it according to the tourist - Adopt the other's perspective - Research and develop accurate information aiming to improve commentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate and effective communication skills in accordance with the profession performance - Ability to seek out linkages, causality and relationships using comparative techniques of analysis - Use of verbal and non verbal language suitable to the working context - Act as a cultural mediator facilitating culture exchange and communication - Use correctly the tourists social codes

Table 1. Intercultural Competences for Tourist Guides. Source: Brito (2014).

To be a cultural mediator is not always easy. Every tourist brings a model of conduct, a code of values and behaviours, different from those of the country s/he is visiting, which necessarily interfere in social life. As mentioned above, the relationship established between the tourist and his/her host is an asymmetrical one, in which the visitor is the client and the visited is the service supplier. The visitor will always try to show his/her economic power and somehow its supremacy over the natives. It is at this point that the guide interferes with his/her know-how that Jafari (1982) calls cultural mix – a multi-directional interaction between:

- The imported culture, that is, the original culture of the tourist;
- The tourist culture, or behaviour patterns displayed by the tourist during a trip and;
- The local culture, understood as the host country culture.

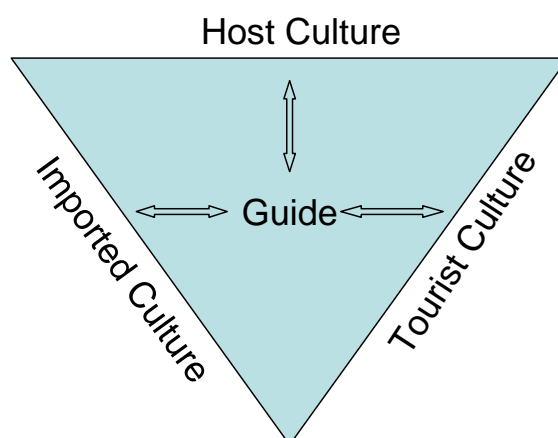


Figure 1. The tour guide in the centre of *Cultural-Mix*. Source: adapted from Jafari (1982).

The correct attitude of the guide in presence of this cultural mix will lead to the establishment of contact and the adoption of an acceptable behaviour for both parties, benefiting both the tourists and the host community. The wrong attitude will lead to social friction and conflict.

Still about cultural mediation, according to Salazar (2005):

Through their discourse and narratives, local tour guides are key actors in the process of “localizing” – folklorizing, ethnicizing, and exoticizing – a destination. [...] They are entrusted with the public relations mission to “encapsulate the essence of place (Salazar, 2005: 629).

Guides are prepared to be a window on to a site, region or even country. In a few words, they distinguish what is local (objects, concepts, or even feelings) and make it understandable to tourists’ global minds. To do that, they have to find the right words, both when conveying information and delivering interpretation.

1.2. Tourist Information versus Heritage Interpretation

Several authors have written about tourist guides, their role of information givers (Holloway, 1981) and interpreters (Almagor, 1985), pathfinders, mediators and leaders (Cohen, 1985) of intermediaries (Rabotic, 2010), their performance and discourse (Salazar, 2005), but very few adopted an intercultural approach when analysing guides’ professional skills. Tourist guides are the essential interface between the host destination and the visitors. In fact, they are front-line employees who are very much responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with the tour services offered by a destination (Ap and Wong, 2001). Also Geva and Goldman (1991) found that the performance of a tourist guide is key to the success of a tour. From all guides roles, conveying information and interpretation are arguably the most relevant ones, but they are not exactly the same.

There are many definitions of information and interpretation. According to Cooke (1999) information is composed of a number of structured data, placed in a useful and significant context, which gives orientation, instruction and knowledge to the receptor, consequently s/he becomes more prepared to enhance a given activity or to decide.

The concept of information is related to entropy i.e. “randomicity, or absence of organization in a certain situation”. [...] “Information is a measure of uncertainty or entropy in a situation. The more uncertain one is, the more information he needs” (Littlejohn, 1988: 153). The aim of information is to reduce, completely if possible, the uncertainty of the receiver. When a situation is familiar to us, we need less information; when we don’t know anything about a subject, we need more information. Thus, if we have more information, we feel freer to choose and we will be surer of what we decide.

Accordingly, we can define tourist information as follows:

A set of services given to the tourist which aim to inform and guide him during his stay or, inclusively, all information that will help him preparing his stay in a more accurate way (Majó and Galí, 2002: 397).

For a tourist guide, tourist information is a set of simple and precise data: transport options, timetables, numbers, monuments location, how to use maps, etc.

Information is different from interpretation. Interpretation is personal, not repeatable and it gives to the guides’ speech a unique character. In a very simple way, it may be said that interpretation is to reveal meanings, or to give a meaning to something through a message. According to Tilden

interpretation is “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and connections through the use of original objects, direct experience and illustrative means, instead of simply to communicate factual information” (Tilden, 1977: 8).

On its Internet site, NAI (National Association for Interpretation) defines interpretation as “a communication process, which is based on the mission of establishing emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of an audience and the meanings inherent to a resource” (NAI).

In this definition we find the idea of “mission”, as the aim and the reason for interpretation, associated with emotion, knowledge and intellect, which are fundamental to understand heritage and transmit a message about it.

In the context of social sciences, tourism is in its essence a cultural and intercultural phenomenon. According to Rabotic (2010), the guide is an intermediary between the site and the tourist. In this intercultural relation, tourist guides have the responsibility and the power of being information givers – of hiding, showing, selecting and interpreting the information that is given to the tourist.

Nevertheless, it seems that the role of guides is changing. In the past few years, new roles have been attributed to guides, whereas others are losing their importance. This is the case of two roles – pathfinder and information giver. Nowadays tourists can easily access a GPS system, Internet, I-phone, Podcast or any other new technologies, which help them finding any site; maps, tips and all kind of specific information about any spot are always available.

On the other hand, communication and interpretation (as psycho-social roles which encourage values change), mediation (avoiding misunderstanding and conflicts) and leadership (especially in the caretaking and safety spheres), sustainability and responsibility (as a resource protector and heritage manager) and education (in an informal and intercultural perspective) are giving way to different types of guides and guided tours.

Table 2 shows some practical examples of how intercultural interpretation can change a dry speech into an interesting commentary, giving the tourist intangible emotions based on the five senses, but at the same time increasing the tourist’s knowledge (Brito, 2014). Lines present seven types of attractions suggested by Smith (2003), whereas columns represent three different levels of information/interpretation of several Portuguese attractions for English speaking tourists. If the same attractions were presented to another audience speaking another language and having a different culture, interpretation would be different, because it always has to be centred on the tourist (Tilden, 1977).

Guides work with culture and the main motivation of cultural tourism is to know, to discover and to explore heritage elements of a region or country. Among academics, the discussion is how to typify them, since the act of practising tourism is already a cultural act. Smith (2003: 103-104), suggests the following seven types of cultural attractions: built heritage (monuments, architecture, historic buildings), natural heritage (cultural landscapes, national parks, caves), cultural heritage (arts, crafts, festivals, traditional events), industrial heritage (factories, manufacturing works, mills), religious sites (cathedrals, abbeys, pilgrimage routes), military sites (castles, battlefields, museums), literary or artistic spots (houses or landscapes associated with writers).

	Information	Interpretation	Intercultural Interpretation
	Basic: Recognising	Advanced: Understanding	Proficient: Applying
A. Built Heritage			
	<i>Ajuda</i> palace, in Lisbon, was built in the early 19 th century.	This royal palace was never finished because the country was invaded by the French, in 1807 and the Portuguese king fled to Brazil.	In 1808, the English general Wellington came to Portugal to help us defend the country from the French invaders – alliance, friendship.
	That is <i>Batalha</i> Monastery. It was built in the 14 th century, in gothic style, under the orders of King John I.	<i>Batalha</i> (battle, in English) Monastery is called so, because it was built after a Portuguese victory in a battle against the Spaniards.	The Portuguese were helped by the English. Besides, the gothic architecture has English influences, because king John I of Portugal married Philipa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt (son of Edward III) – alliance, family and love.
B. Natural Heritage			
	That is a cork oak field.	The bark of the tree is used for isolation of heat, humidity and vibrations and to make bottle stoppers.	The NASA uses Portuguese cork to isolate space shuttles – collaboration, connecting tradition with innovation.
	The town of Sintra is a world heritage site that combines natural and human-made areas.	There are magnificent palaces and villas scattered in the middle of exotic vegetation, imported from other continents.	Lord Byron, who called Sintra “The Glorious Eden”, in his poem Child Harold, described its romantic atmosphere – culture, beauty.
C. Cultural Heritage			
	Portugal is situated in the southwest of Europe.	Portugal is in a strategic geographic position that partly explains the 15 th Century Discoveries.	Some English words were imported from Portuguese because of sailing: <i>orientation</i> (the Portuguese wanted to reach the orient – India) and <i>risk</i> (once only spatial risk, related to danger in the sea) are two examples – culture, language connections.
D. Industrial Heritage			
	There are many windmills along the Portuguese coast.	Portuguese windmills are round. They don’t follow the European model, but the Arab one.	New mills are not used to grind cereals but to produce electricity, using the energy of the wind – connecting tradition and innovation.
E. Religious Heritage			
	Catholics believe Our Lady appeared to three shepherds at Fatima, in 1917.	Basically, the message of the apparitions of Fatima talks about peace.	1917 is the year of the Russian revolution and the 1 st World War was being fought. The message of peace made sense in this context – peace, faith.
	The cathedral of Lisbon was built in Romanesque style.	It has a fortress-like appearance because it was built to defend the people, after the conquest of Lisbon to the Arabs.	English crusaders helped the Portuguese during the conquest. To pay homage to them, the first bishop of Lisbon was English, Hastings was his name – alliance, friendship.

F. Military Heritage		
St. George Castle overlooks Lisbon on top of a hill.	The first king conquered the castle of the moors with the help of the crusaders, who came from several countries in Europe.	The name St. George was given to the castle in the 14 th century when the English, under the protection of St. George, helped the Portuguese against the Spaniards – protection, friendship.
G. Literary or Artistic Heritage		
Sintra was described by several foreign writers in the 19th century.	They all loved the nature and the romantic atmosphere of Sintra.	One of them was Lord Byron, who lived in Hotel Lawrence. It has a perfect atmosphere for a five o'clock tea. Shall we have tea there? – comfort, home.

Table 2. Three Information/Interpretation Levels (English speaking public). Source: Brito (2014).

2. Methodology

In this paper the anthropological technique of direct/participant observation was used, defined as “direct involvement of the field researcher with the social group studied, within the parameters of the group standards” (Iturra, 1987: 149). However “observation on its own is parcelled, insufficient, unfocused or inefficient. The other technique, which completes, corrects and improves observation, is the interview” (Ramos, 2002: 56). Therefore, 13 guides were interviewed after their observation in the National Coach Museum (NCM). These interviews are part of a PhD thesis but for obvious space reasons they are not analysed in this study. Nevertheless, this procedure allowed the confirmation of the results of direct observation. A new NCM was opened to the public in 2014 – the new modern building is right in front of the old one. The old NCM, where part of the collection can still be seen, was chosen for the observation of the guides work because it has very good conditions for the research: the visit is very structured (the pathway cannot be changed from the entrance to the exit, but guides can select the coaches they want to interpret along the way); it is a round tour, meaning that guides come back to the starting point; it is a short visit (it lasts from 20 to 40 minutes); there is not too much noise or other circumstances which prevent from listening to what tourist guides have to say. Typically, guided visits only include the ground floor of the museum.

Language/Nationality	Nr. of parties	Total nr. of tourists
French	17	556
Germans	5	129
Americans	5	125
Italians	4	98
Spanish	2	63
Portuguese	3	50
Others English speaking (Israeli, Chinese and Japanese)	3	84
Mixed (several languages)	11	176
Total	50	1281

Table 3. Tourists' parties observed in the Coach Museum. Source: Brito (2012).

According to table 3, fifty guides and 1281 tourists were observed, intermittently, in September and October 2009 (Brito, 2012). Most of them were French. The aim was initially to record behaviour patterns of tourists and guides as well as deviations to those patterns. However, as data were classified the idea of organising them according to guides' intercultural skills took shape and a grill was prepared. Afterwards, data were analysed and categorized so that the investigator could understand the interpretation strategies used by tourist guides (Brito, 2012).

2.1. Procedure

The investigator followed the guided visits observing guides and tourists' behaviour, and trying not to interact or talk with the tourists, if possible. However, when a tourist started talking to the investigator, he obviously had to answer. For that reason, the investigation technique is called direct/participant observation.

The investigator registered professional guides and tourists' behaviour patterns, but the observation concentrated above all in the use of guides' intercultural skills and cultural heritage interpretation strategies, although it also registered some tourists' behaviour typologies.

The investigation started by the previous analysis of figures and historical data on the NCM, in its library, collecting basic information about the monument, which was already familiar to the researcher, who was a tourist guide for 20 years and performed countless visits to the museum.

In the first day observation focused on the museum workers and their interpersonal relations. From the second day, observation of the guided tours started. The researcher waited at the entrance of the museum for the tourists' parties and asked the guide if he could follow the visit. If the answer was positive, he would discretely follow the group, usually right behind the last client, listening to the guide, looking at the selected coaches, observing the behaviour of both guide and tourists and writing some notes, which were completed after the visit.

At the end of each visit, the investigator talked with the guide, offered him/her a honey drop for the throat and collected some extra information about the party, such as the number which could complete the observation. After that, the investigator mentally revised the visit and wrote his last notes.

The researcher also evaluated guides' language skills. He did it automatically and instinctively, because that is his everyday work as a teacher, language coordinator and member of the official jury who evaluates candidates to the national tourist guide examination (for 15 years). The European systems of language skills evaluation was used because it is simple and clear, dividing competences in levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 e C2), in which A1 is the minimum and C2 the maximum.

3. Intercultural Interpretation – Eight issues

In this section we analyse eight issues related to the communication and interpretation of heritage in the context of the NCM in Lisbon. In order to keep confidential the identity of the guides (from now on G) conducting visits to the museum, they were given a number. The following intercultural interpretation issues of their performance were analysed: inter-language and inter-culture, non-verbal communication, cultural identity, cultural shock, ethnocentrism, intercultural conflict, stereotypes and generalization and *globalization*.

3.1. Inter-language and inter-culture

Although the information given by the guides is not always accurate, it is passed on clearly, in an understandable and organised way. Most guides have a proficiency level in the languages they speak, between B2 (12 guides = 24.4%) and C2 (11 guides = 22.4%). But most guides have a C1 level (26 guides = 52.9%). If level C1 and C2 are considered together it is possible to affirm $\frac{3}{4}$ (75.3%) of the professionals are above the minimum language level for guiding and $\frac{1}{4}$ have the minimum level (24.4%). Furthermore, guides know how to use idiomatic expressions in the language of the tourists. G 17 talking about a very sumptuous coach: *It's a show-off coach*; G 38 referring the oldest coach in the collection: *It looks like it's falling apart*; or pointing out a fast coach: *Time is money*; G 40 explaining an aphorism in Italian: *This three coaches are the origin of the Italian saying Fare il portoghese (do it the Portuguese way), when you manage to enter in a theatre or stadium without paying the ticket.*

3.2. Non-verbal communication

Performing one of their relevant roles – heritage preservation – guides always advise tourists of the existence of two rules: *flash photography is forbidden and it is not allowed to touch the coaches*. Some guides prove to be good leaders and their rules are respected. Others are not. Leadership depends highly on how they use and relate verbal and non-verbal communication. While speaking, those who are respected look people in their eyes, use their hands to express that the matter is serious and their voice tone is sharp, followed with two or three seconds of silence. In opposition, the misuse of non-verbal language and the incorrect tone leads to the misbehaviour of tourists.

Another misbehaviour of the guides is related to the objects they use to point out details on the coaches, such as rolled magazines (G 9), plastic bottles (G 10), small flags (G 29), and so forth. The use of such objects is neither aesthetic nor appropriate for both the museum and the professional guide. Non-verbal communication influences both the image of the guide and the museum and also its comprehension. But there are other issues concerned with non-verbal communication.

3.2.1. Environment

Environment influences the people and the way they behave. But only about 50% of the guides introduce the environment to tourists. People should be introduced to what happened in that environment. G 12 says: *Let's imagine that today it's the king's birthday. You know how he loves horses. So there is a horse riding show in this room. Everyone is dressed up for the occasion. Ladies are wearing beautiful long dresses and men come in their uniforms. They attend the show from up there in the gallery, whereas the king and the royal family are up here in this balcony.* This kind of introduction to the museum can be thought of as storytelling. It appeals to the imagination of the tourists so that they understand better the context of the museum.

3.2.2. Artefacts

G 16: *Fancy those are some of the vehicles they used to come to the king's birthday party: Ferraris, a Rolls Royce and some Mercedes*; G 8: *The English carriage is like a Rolls-Royce*; G 13: *The berline of Queen Mary I? It was her Maserati, only air conditioning is missing*; G 16 and G24: *Think of the museum as a family garage.* Cars are a symbol of social status and power. They tell us about the social position of the owner. It was like that in the past and it is exactly the same in the present. The relationship between past and present is quite significant. Several guides also compare the museum to a garage, evoking the intangible notion of home, family and everyday life.

3.2.2. Paralanguage

Sometimes guides become boring (G 1, G 2, G 8, G 17, G 21, G 27, G 32, G 47). Visitors move away and spend the rest of the time taking pictures or visiting the museum on their own. Guides

should be more aware of how tourists' attention changes along the visit. Four different attitudes can be observed in the tourists:

- Participant – tourists ask and answer questions, so there is dialogue
- Attentive – tourists listen to their guide but don't talk
- Variable – tourists take pictures, read signs and listen to the guide
- Absent – tourists walk away from their guide

Arguably, these four attitudes are related to different factors, above all, the communication skills of the guide, but also to the existence of a real interest in the museum, the attraction exercised by the coaches and their magnificence, the environment and the actions of the other people around. Therefore, the four above mentioned attitudes correspond to communication styles: two-way communication; one-way communication; intermittent communication and; no communication.

Tourists react to the guide's statements. They make faces, they make sounds, they laugh and they demonstrate piety. Guides should be aware of the significance of these reactions. The reaction of tourists to what guides say is often very positive. They say: *Oh, I see! Oh, now I understand!* When you get such reactions from the tourists it means they discovered something they didn't know before – that is a purpose and a pleasure for those who make interpretation.

3.2.3. *Kinesics*

Body language is not the same everywhere. For instance, everyone knows that forming a circle with the thumb and forefinger means different things according to where you are: Ok (US), zero (FR), money (JAP), asshole (South IT), vagina (GREECE). Most guides smile and have an informal and pleasant attitude. They have their own style, eloquent and convincing, as you would expect from a good communicator. Nevertheless, sometimes gestures are not appropriate and they reveal hidden tension or even hostility. Hands, eyes and face expression are usually complemented with a nice voice modulation and follow verbal expression. Furthermore, attitudes are generally adapted to the clients and their nationality. For instance, G 4 makes a gesture with her arms while interpreting a coach for her German party that demonstrates force, courage and decision, which is very inappropriate for the Portuguese; G15 was working with an Italian party. He used hand gestures and face expression all the time.

3.2.5. *Proxemics*

It varies with culture. Some guides want English parties to get to close and invade their personal area – impossible. Other guides explain a detail under the coach for a party of 40 people. Of course, nobody sees what he or she is trying to explain.

3.2.6 *Chronemics*

The notion of time varies from one region or country to the other, from North to South and from West to Est. Guides usually settle the pace of their visit to the different notions of time their parties have. Otherwise, they can generate an intercultural conflict with their clients. Think of the difference between Germans and Brazilians, for instance. Brazilians like to stroll in the museum whereas Germans have to make sure that they see the maximum of coaches in the minimum of time.

3.3. *Cultural Identity*

Cultural identity is built on all the non-verbal and verbal issues we have been talking about. We create our cultural identity (the Self) to understand our position in the world, i.e. what is similar and different from the rest of the people (the Other). Cultural identity is neither universal nor absolute. It is dynamic and always changing. But it is absolutely fundamental to create boundaries so that we can constantly destroy them and substitute them with new boundaries. The whole visit of the Coach Museum is a process of identity building, a declaration of the Portuguese heritage

relevance. Guides do it showing the exuberance of the baroque period and the wealth of Portugal in the early 18th century, presenting the extravagant coaches of King John V and relating them to the gold and diamonds that came from Brazil. G 4: *These coaches are completely covered with gold leaf*; G 5: *Our embassy to the Pope was constituted by 15 coaches* (actually there were only five Portuguese coaches). Tourists react saying the coaches are too heavy or even despising them.

3.4. Cultural Shock

People affect the culture of the tourist destination and are affected by the interaction with that culture. So there is always some degree of cultural shock when dealing with a different culture. But cultural shock is not as negative, as one may think. It is a natural reaction people have when adjusting to new situations. In the museum, a typical cultural shock is when you call the attention of American tourists to the naked statues representing the four seasons or the four continents decorating the coaches, especially Pope Clement XI's coach. G 38: *There are naked women here. Who wants to see naked women?* Of course the guide was very acquainted with her clients and she knew that these jokes didn't offend them. Therefore, from cultural shock, through humour, we come to adjustment and knowledge about how the women's body was considered a beautiful piece of art in the 18th century. Therefore, intercultural communication is a process of dealing with cultural shock and adjusting. In this process there may be some degree of cultural change.

3.5. Ethnocentrism

Sometimes it is disguised in hyperboles. G 11: *King John V can be compared with the "Sun King" Louis XIV of France for his power and wealth that came from the trade of precious goods with Brazil*; G 17: *The Coach of Queen Mary Ann of Austria was built to impress*. We are used to think of ethnocentrism in a negative way, as a statement of the superiority of a given culture. But ethnocentrism is essential to maintain the integrity of a culture keeping it from the aggression of the other cultures. Tourists sometimes try to offend the guide's culture. It is an exercise (a sort of a game) to see how strong the guide's culture is and how long it can resist the tourist's culture. Take the French, or the Italians or other nationality as an example, when they say their heritage is superior or larger (they have better and bigger coaches), or when they say their culture is more important than your own. There is no such thing. Cultures can be dominant or not but only during a certain period of time. The guides' role is to promote their own culture and slowly change the ethnocentric mentality of (some) tourists.

3.6. Intercultural Conflict

Intercultural conflict is part of intercultural interaction. It happens all the time in guiding, for instance with the different conceptions of time. In order to keep with the time and to manage the tour itinerary, even in the coach museum, guides have to ask the tourists to be punctual and follow them. However, punctuality and organisation is something hard to attain for some nationalities and tourists. Therefore, guides have to be aware of the problem and understand why tourists are punctual or not. Their attitude may change in a positive or negative way towards these tourists – they may become more flexible and accept their clients will be late, or more inflexible and leave someone behind in the museum. The best way to solve the problem is negotiation, saying something like *if you are punctual I will show you something that is not in the itinerary*.

3.7. Stereotypes and Generalization

Stereotypes are normative when they are overgeneralizations that are based on limited information (Muslims are violent and terrorists is an information based on media news), or non-normative

when are purely self-projective – we project concepts from our own culture onto people of another culture (Italians might think that Portuguese love pasta).

In guiding, we tend overall to do something else: when we approach to another culture, we tend to abusive generalization: Germans are cold; French are arrogant; Spaniards love bullfights. The more stereotypical our perception of the culture, the less effective our interactions will be. We should avoid overgeneralizations, especially those beginning with *All*. Likewise, tourists also tend to abusive generalization. At the end of a visit to the coach museum you might listen to comments such as: *How come that the Portuguese have all this wealth in the museum. I thought they were poor!*

3.8. Glocalization

Glocalization (a combination of globalization and localization) is a term that describes the adaptation of international products around the particularities of a local culture in which they are sold. McDonalds is a good example of this with special menus using local products to satisfy local consumers' needs. Guides use stories that everyone knows such as Cinderella (global) to explain what they want about a coach (local) in the museum and convey the idea of elegance, wealth and fantasy to the tourists. They say: *This is Cinderella Coach* (G 5, G 13, G15, G 17, G25 and G40) or they evoke Sherlock Holmes and Jack, the Ripper (G 10) and immediately they activate the imagination of the tourists, globalizing a local coach.

4. Final Considerations

Tourism is a social phenomenon, defined by cultural contact. Tourism is not only cultural but also intercultural and there is always some degree of cultural exchange when two cultures are in contact. Within the tourism system, guides have a relevant role in cultural contact and eventually cultural change. Nevertheless, their crucial role is still today not recognised by stakeholders. Guides translate culture(s) in quite particular circumstances of cultural diversity, which may generate conflicts that they have to manage in the appropriate subtle way.

According to the participant observation in the Coach Museum of Lisbon, tourist guides are good communicators in foreign languages, 75% have a proficiency language level (C1 according to the European framework). They are very much aware of the tourists' cultural references and they easily convey their messages. As intercultural mediators, they live in a "cultural limbo" between the tourist culture and their own culture. They constantly and unconsciously use different intercultural communication strategies to deliver their messages. Nevertheless, they seem to be aware of their speech but unaware of their body language, which sometimes conveys incorrect or inconvenient information.

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